

F.A. Cup 2nd round preview

READING come to Loakes Park on Saturday eager to forget last season's defeat at the hands of Wycombe's Isthmian League counterparts **Hendon**.

The Berkshire side's FA Cup hopes nosedived in the first round last season and the man who scored the solitary goal was none other than Wanderer **Alan Phillips**.

Then with **Hendon**, **Phillips** strode forward to knock in the all-important goal, but **Reading** will be keeping a careful check on **Phillips'** forward moves.

Promoted to the Third Division at the end of last season after a spell of five



John Murray

years in the Fourth Division, **Reading** began the campaign in brilliant fashion and at one stage they were right up there at the top of the table. However, in recent weeks, they have come tumbling down to earth and currently occupy a position which is causing some concern — eighth from bottom.

Only three points from the last nine games have been achieved. However, their most recent game, almost two weeks ago, saw them narrowly beaten 2-1 at **Tranmere**, but the impression gained was that the **Elm Park** side were beginning to recover the thread they had lost.

Injuries

Injuries and transfer requests have rocked the **Royals**, but manager **Charlie Hurley**, the former **Sunderland** and **Eire** centre-half, has continued a search to no avail for new players.

He made a bid for **Southall's** brilliant midfielder **Alan Devonshire**, but was beaten to the signature by First Division strugglers **West Ham**. Last week he attempted to sign **Cardiff City** midfielder **Brian Attley**, but his offer of £12,000 was turned down by the **Cardiff** club.

The **Reading** boss has been searching the non-league sides and **Reading**

have been represented several times at **Wycombe** matches and the rumoured target was striker **Ian Pearson**, formerly with **Plymouth Argyle**.

The pressure is on **Reading** to do well. Without a game last Saturday because of the frost-bound **Elm Park** pitch, **Reading** are lacking in match practice and the notorious **Wycombe** slope could be the deciding factor in the match.

In goal for the Berkshire team is **Steve Death**, the club's record signing at £20,000 from **West Ham** almost six years ago. He has been in brilliant form throughout his career and especially this season.

At right-back is former **Guildford** and **Dorking** star **Gary Peters**. He has a habit of storming through and scoring vital goals. Is best when coming forward.

The left-back vacancy is likely to be filled by former



Robin Friday

Fulham defender **Dave Moreline**. He has recently been playing in the middle of the defence with **Paul Bennett**, **Reading's** only new signing from last year. **Bennett** was secured from FA Cup winners **Southampton** for £8,000. **Tommy Youlden**, back after a rib injury, is likely to be **Bennett's** central defensive partner.

Former skipper **Stewart Henderson**, who spent several seasons at **Brighton**, is another candidate for a defensive position, but it

could be that manager **Charlie Hurley** will push him into a midfield role.

If he does then the man most likely to make way for **Henderson** is club skipper **Gordon Cumming**. He has been out of the side for the last three matches. The first



Ray Hiron

game, against **Preston**, he missed because of flu, but since then he has been unable to command a regular place.

Bruce Stuckey, formerly with **Sunderland** and **Torquay**, has been the stand-in skipper for the past three games and he looks a certain starter along with battling **Bryan Carnaby**, who has been dogged with injuries this season.

Flair

Up front, **Reading** have a combination of experience and flair. Lanky **Ray Hiron**, a free signing from **Portsmouth** two seasons ago, provides the experience and height to the front line, while top scorer **John Murray** and flamboyant **Robin Friday** provide the flair.

Friday will be known to the **Wanderers** from his days at **Hayes**. The former non-League striker, who joined **Reading** three seasons ago, has been the top scorer for the past two years, but has been unable to find his goalscoring touch this season.

However, **John Murray**, formerly with **Bury** and **Burnley**, has been finding the target with consistency. To date, **Murray** has scored on 10 occasions in the League and Cup matches this season. In fact, he is the only ever-present player in the **Reading** squad.